

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 29, 2004

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA UPLAND HABITAT GOALS

File No. 01-118
Project Manager: Ann Buell

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$16,500 to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council, to undertake a feasibility study, including a detailed scope of work and budget, for an upland habitat goals analysis for the San Francisco Bay Area.

LOCATION: All nine San Francisco Bay Area Counties: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Regional Map

Exhibit 2: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed sixteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$16,500) to Greenbelt Alliance to undertake a feasibility study, including a detailed scope of work and budget, for an upland habitat goals analysis for the San Francisco Bay Area, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, Greenbelt Alliance shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer a detailed work program, budget and schedule for the feasibility study; and the names and qualifications of any contractors and subcontractors that it intends to employ.
2. All Conservancy funds disbursed under this authorization shall be reimbursed from the Resource Agency's Legacy Project."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals feasibility study is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164 regarding the Conservancy's mandate to address the resource and recreation goals of the San Francisco Bay Area, and with the authority of the Conservancy under Public Resources Code Section 31111 to award grants to non-profit organizations for these purposes.
 2. The San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)3 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY: Staff requests authorization to disburse up to \$16,500 to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council (BAOSC), to prepare a feasibility study, including a detailed scope of work and budget, for an upland habitat goals analysis for the San Francisco Bay Area. This analysis will lead to the development of an upland habitat goals report, similar to the widely used *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals* report (1999) written for the wetland areas around San Francisco Bay. The analysis will focus on the identification and characterization of core habitat areas and critical habitat linkages between them and will complement the *Habitat Goals* report by addressing areas not included in that report but clearly relevant to it. This feasibility study is phase one of a two-phase project. The development of the report will be phase two, which is not part of this funding request.

Conservancy authorization will allow the BAOSC to work with an advisory committee to conduct background research on existing information, gather ideas on key issues, develop a draft scope of work and budget for the report, and identify methodologies for identifying specific goals. The advisory committee will include BAOSC members and other natural science and land management professionals, such as experts from the Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The advisory committee's work will be followed by a workshop that will include both the advisory committee and many additional participants to refine the advisory committee's draft work. The workshop format will maximize opportunities to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of a broad cross-section of natural scientists, environmental regulators, funders, and project implementers from around the Bay Area.

The production of the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals* report was a multi-year effort, but the BAOSC hopes that, after this proposed analysis is complete, they will be able to develop the upland habitat goals report in approximately one year. This ambitious time frame is motivated by the fact that decisions about project development, implementation, and funding are being made continuously around the San Francisco Bay Area by land conservation agencies and organizations without a common understanding of the regional goals for upland habitat. A comprehensive report on habitat goals for upland areas is expected to provide guidance for future regional or state-wide funding decisions just as the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals* report is now being used as the primary planning guide for much of the use of public funds, including Proposition 50 funds ("Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002").

Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit environmental organization whose mission is to advance the conservation of open space lands. One of its five core programs is research and education to improve the planning and conservation of land; another program is improving communication between conservation organizations. The proposed project will improve the ability of conservation organizations to plan, identify and articulate regional land conservation goals.

Project History: At the Spotlight on Conservation Workshop held by the State's Legacy Project for the San Francisco Bay Area in October 2002, participants from a broad cross-section of agencies and organizations prioritized criteria for terrestrial biodiversity conservation. Highest priority criteria centered on sufficient area for natural processes and species diversity, rare and endangered species, representative natural communities, and landscape linkages. Now, core habitat areas in the Bay Area and the linkages between them need to be identified so that land conservation, land use, and transportation planning decisions will be well informed. Because habitat goals for wetland areas around San Francisco Bay's perimeter have already been identified in the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Report*, the next study area was logically upland habitat—both those areas that are directly adjacent to bay wetlands and those farther from the bay shore.

The Legacy Project entered into an Interagency Agreement with the State Coastal Conservancy in June 2003 to provide the Conservancy with funds to carry out the first phase of this proposed project, with specific focus given to the designing of a scope of work, preliminary identification of priority linkages within the Bay Area and to adjacent ecoregions, and as seed money to attract funds to the second phase of this project (report production).

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy (Resource Agency)	\$16,500
In-kind Services	<u>32,500</u>
Total Project Cost	\$49,000

The Conservancy's contribution to the proposed project is expected to come from a grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the California Resources Agency to implement the Legacy Project as described in an existing Interagency Agreement (OCA23506) between the Conservancy and the Resources Agency. Matching funds reflect the time of an approximately 10-member advisory committee and the time of approximately 50 participants at the proposed workshop.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The Conservancy is authorized under Section 31111 of the Public Resources Code to fund and undertake plans and feasibility studies, and to award grants to nonprofit organizations for these purposes, in order to implement Division 21. The proposed grant to Greenbelt Alliance would assist the nonprofit organization and its collaborators as they analyze upland habitat needs for the San Francisco Bay Area.

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, to address resource and recreational goals in the San Francisco Bay Area. The proposed authorization will assist the Conservancy and its project partners in meeting these goals by facilitating the identification and prioritization of significant uplands in the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program area.

Consistent with §31163(c), the Conservancy will be supporting interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area as the scope of work for the full study is designed.

This project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in §31163(d) in that (1) it is multijurisdictional, involving all nine Bay Area Counties; (2) it can be implemented in a timely way because the Greenbelt Alliance/Bay Area Open Space Council and its members are ready to begin work; and (3) it includes matching funds in the form of advisory committee and workshop participants' volunteered time.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 9 Objective A** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will be the first step in identifying high-priority upland habitat areas for the Bay Program and project partners. This project will refine and update current knowledge of high priority areas meeting resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** This project is supported by the membership of the Bay Area Open Space Council, a consortium of more than 50 land conservation agencies and organizations. Letters of support from multijurisdictional organizations reflect this regional support (see Exhibit 2).
4. **Location:** The proposed project area would be located within the nine-County San Francisco Bay Area region and would focus on the upland areas of these nine Counties.
5. **Need:** Dozens of resources professionals from around the San Francisco Bay Area will donate their time to develop this scope of work, but staff at the Bay Area Open Space Council needs funding to lead the effort in a timely way.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** In creating the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, the legislature designated the San Francisco Bay Area as an area of statewide concern.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.

12. **Readiness:** The Bay Area Open Space Council is already doing work that is strongly related to this proposal and it is ready to turn its attention to this specific new project.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See the “Project History” section above.
15. **Cooperation:** This project will benefit from the in-kind contributions of many nonprofit organizations and public agencies.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed study does not have the potential to result in any physical changes to the environment, and therefore is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as provided in 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15378.